

HOW CAN WE HELP AT HOME?

Strategies to Support Children / Young People (CYP) Who Present With a Stammer

What is stammering?

Stammering (known as stuttering in USA) can present itself in many ways. If a CYP has a stammer you may notice that they:

- Repeat single sounds (e.g. h-h-hello)
- Prolong sounds e.g. mmmmy name is....
- Block sounds (their mouth is open but no sound comes out)
- Show tension in the muscles around their eyes, nose, lips or neck
- Have extra body movements such as tapping their fingers (known as secondary behaviours)
- Hold their breath when talking
- Take a deep breath before speaking
- Avoid using words that they find difficult to say
- Avoid certain social situations (e.g. talking to unfamiliar adults/peers)

How can you help?

- CYP who stammer may need more time to express their ideas, so during question and answer activities it is helpful if the adult slows his or her own rate of speech so that the CYP knows that there is no need to hurry.
- CYP often lose eye contact when stammering and it's helpful if adults don't look away but give the same eye contact as they would if speaking to a CYP who is fluent.
- Reduce the number of questions that you ask. If you need information from a dysfluent CYP and are fairly sure of the content then try to give alternatives, e.g. "Did it happen in school or on the bus?"
- There are some speaking situations that help a stammering child to speak more fluently. For example: speaking or reading with another person; reciting familiar lists like the days of the week or counting, singing, describing a picture they have drawn, reciting nursery rhymes, speaking with actions.

- Finishing off sentences is usually unhelpful as it can reduce self-confidence and increase frustration, especially if the person chooses words different from those intended by the stammering CYP.
- Try not to give the CYP instructions as to what to do, (e.g. slow down, take a breath, try again etc.) This is not helpful in the long term and can increase frustration and anxiety. Instead, maintain easy eye contact and give them plenty of time to finish what there are trying to say on their own.

Useful Websites

- <https://stamma.org> British Stammering Association with information and videos about how to support people who stammer. Phone line and web chat available
- <https://actionforstammeringchildren.org> Fun games and activities for children to get involved with as well as lots of information about stammering and personal stories from children about their experiences.
- <https://michaelpalincetreforstammering.org>

If you require any further support/advice please contact via the following email

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In the subject line please state **FAO Virtual School SLCN Support** to ensure that your message is actioned by the relevant team.